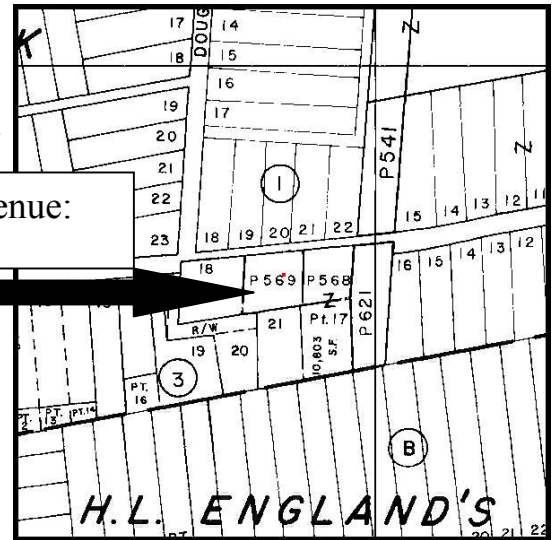


A two-story white house with a red roof and black shutters. The house features a front porch with white columns and a decorative railing. The house is surrounded by green grass and trees.

305 Lincoln Avenue:
P569



STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that 305 Lincoln Avenue be found eligible for designation as a single site (Landmark) Rockville Historic District in accordance with the adopted criteria.

Notices of the HDC evaluation were sent via first class mail to adjacent and confronting property owners, Citizen's Associations and other interested parties on August 14, 2002. The agenda for the evaluation meeting was also posted on the city's web page and the property was posted.

The current owner, Norma H. Duffin, and Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation nominated the house at 305 Lincoln Avenue for historic designation. The Maryland Historical Trust Historic Site Inventory Form (MHT form) was prepared by Peerless Rockville in 1986 and updated by Eileen McGuckian, Director of Peerless Rockville, and City staff.

SIGNIFICANCE: The MHT Form for 305 Lincoln stated: The home of Carlisle Blair Hill has been occupied by four generations of the Hill family, one of the pioneer families in the black community of Lincoln Park. One of the oldest surviving and intact structures in Lincoln Park, the original three to four room vernacular dwelling house was constructed in 1880 before the subdivision of Lincoln Park was created. Additions and improvements to the original house were made about 1917 and all modifications since that time are considered reversible. The house is a large prosperous house and not typical of modest vernacular houses or rental properties built in the early years of Lincoln Park and Montgomery County.

The two-story house is a three-bay by one-bay vernacular farmhouse with a rear kitchen wing. It has a symmetrical front façade, a small window in each of the prominent side gables, a full-width one-story front porch with a ladder cornice trim, and several additions to the rear kitchen wing on the rear of the house.

SUMMARY OF HISTORY

The 1892 Lincoln Park Subdivision was one of the first, if not the first, subdivision in Montgomery County for sale to African Americans. It is likely that the area was set aside for black ownership because at least five black families had already purchased land and established homes in the area by 1879. A year later, Simeon Berry, a white former Confederate soldier, purchased one acre of land from Chandler Keys. Two days later, Berry sold one half of the land to Rueben Thomas Hill for \$50. He willed the other half-acre and his personal property to the senior Rueben Hill upon his death in December of 1880. This house is thought to have been a small 1-1/2 story two-room dwelling with a loft, which is incorporated into the present structure.

The story of the Hill family in the 19th and 20th Century is illustrative of the restrictions and hardships that African-Americans encountered in their daily lives before desegregation. Rueben Hill (1832-1917) was a slave of the Stonestreet family before emancipation. His wife, Rachel Martin, was a free mulatto woman and thus their children were born free. Reuben and Rachel did not formally marry until 1871 since he was a slave. They purchased land on “Burgundy” east of Horner’s Lane after their marriage, and are one of the five African-American families shown on the 1879 Hopkins Atlas map. Their oldest child was Rueben Thomas Hill, born in 1856.

Rueben Hill Sr. and then his son, Rueben Thomas Hill, a sexton for Christ Episcopal Church and a carpenter, later owned the property left by Simeon Berry. It is believed that Rueben Thomas Hill expanded the house to its present configuration after his father’s death in 1917. He, in turn, left it to his two daughters, Edith Manley and Leola Williams, and to his grandson Carlisle Blair Hill, who was named after two families allied by marriage, the Carlisle and Blair families. The original lot was reduced in size in the 20th Century. Carlisle Blair Hill was raised at 305 Lincoln by his two aunts and inherited the property. The family exhibited its pride in its role as one of the founding families of Lincoln Park and its stewardship and ownership of the oldest existing house in the community in the obituary of Carlisle Blair Hill in 1986, which stated that Mr. Hill was, “the owner of a historic house in Rockville.” Upon Carlisle Blair Hill’s death, the house was left to the current owner, Norma Hill Duffin of Lincoln Park.

SUMMARIES OF TESTIMONY ON 305 LINCOLN AVENUE:

Suzanne Fisher, President of Peerless Rockville, spoke for co-nominators Peerless Rockville and Norma Hill Duffin, the present owner, who was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Duffin is in favor of designation.

Ms. Fisher stated that Peerless Rockville was pleased to nominate the property and supports historic designation of this property. She noted that the house is a physical link to a time when a former slave owned and lived in a house in Rockville.

No one spoke in opposition to designation. No additional comments were submitted prior to the closing of the record at the close of business on September 1, 2002.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

Staff concurs with the nominators that 305 Lincoln Avenue meets the criteria for designation as a single site local historic district by the City of Rockville. Staff found that it is significant to the City of Rockville in that it is the only remaining original African-American resource that predates Lincoln Park. It is also significant historically in that this house and other now-lost African-American homesteads created a small community of black families before 1879 near Rockville. It is significant in that it is associated with four generations of the Hill family, which is known to have been significant community leaders in Lincoln Park. In addition, the story of the Hill family in Lincoln Park is illustrative of the hardships and restrictions that African-Americans faced in their daily lives during segregation. Now amidst many smaller post-WWII houses, the vernacular farmhouse at 305 Lincoln is instantly recognizable as being from another era, and is a familiar community landmark.